



SAVING SEA TURTLES

Name: Christian Miller

Age: 13 **Grade:** 9

Town: Palm Beach, Florida

School: Palm Beach

Day School

Goal: Protect sea turtles, keep turtle species from disappearing



WHAT HE DID

Summary

Sea turtles are reptiles that live in the ocean; they only come to the beach to lay eggs. When baby turtles hatch, they crawl out of the nest (simply a hole in the sand), crawl to the ocean, and swim away.

However, there are several problems: Many baby turtles are eaten by dogs, crabs, or other animals...or they're stolen by people who sell the shells for jewelry, etc. And if turtle hatchlings don't make it out of the nest, they can die from the heat or the weight of eggshells that fall on top of them.

Christian grew up on a farm where he learned to love animals. So when he found a dead turtle on the beach behind his house when his family moved to Florida, he was shocked.

After finding more dead turtles, he decided he had to help them—even if it meant giving up many hours of his free time.

Results

In 1990, Christian single-handedly rescued over 3,500 baby



turtles. He's saved more than 12,000 over the past 6 years.

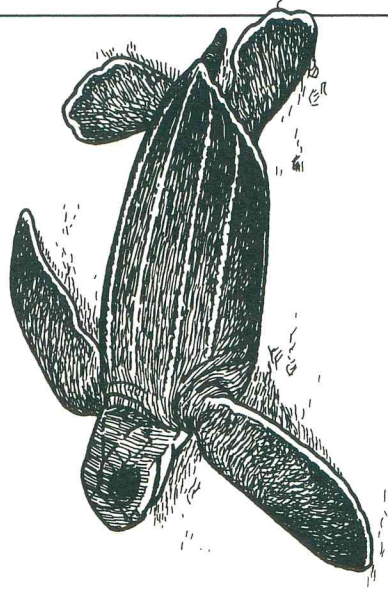
HOW HE DID IT

Christian was involved in a local beach cleanup program called CleanSweep. He told the organizer he was concerned about the turtles, and was referred to the Florida Department of Natural Resources. They put him in touch with other volunteers who spent a year teaching him how to rescue turtles so he could get a permit.

Armed with his permit, Christian set out to look for turtles in distress. Here's what he does on a typical day:

1. He wakes up about 7 a.m., before the sand gets hot, and walks on the beach for 2-3 hours.

2. He looks for tracks to the ocean made by baby turtles. He follows them to the nest, then marks the area with stakes so people won't step on it.



3. He digs the sand out of the hole until he finds eggs.

"Usually, I find a hatched baby turtle that didn't escape with the others," he says. "I carry it to the water and let it swim away." Then he covers the eggs up again.

4. After he patrols the beach, he writes down the number of turtles rescued from each nest, the number that died before he could help them, and the number of hatched, unhatched, and fertilized eggs. He types this data into his computer at home.